11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

builds a tiny thatch hut near the home of his tutor, wears ragged, unsheared sheepskins, and gets his meals by begging. He lives thus for a year or two, until he has mastered the fourteen varieties of chants used in the various masses, and perhaps special chants like the *Praise of Mary* (*Weddāssē Māryām*) which are sung on holidays.

The other, and more important, qualification for the priesthood is marriage according to the law of the church. After a deacon has been married in the customary manner and lived with his wife for at least forty days, their marriage must be solemnized by the celebration of the Eucharist. Thereafter he may not divorce her or remarry if she dies.

With these conditions satisfied, the candidate for priesthood may travel to the *abuna* and be ordained. He acquires thereby the power to bind and to absolve, and is granted full knowledge of the mysteries of the *tābot*. The new priest attaches himself to a church, and is given his share of the monthly assignments for conducting the Mass. This is his main responsibility, though as he grows older he will also acquire confessants to whom he will give advice and assign penances.

Apart from these duties, the life of an Abyssinian priest in many ways resembles that of his lay neighbors. He plows his fields and harvests his crops. He may do business at the markets, or add to his income by weaving. Perhaps the chief difference in his manner of life is the habit of spending time in the "gate of peace," a little building near the church where the clergy assemble after services for hours of drinking *ṭallā* and idle conversation.

In reward for his services—and this is normally the chief inducement to become a priest—the priest is given a share of the revenues in kind brought in from lands owned and managed by the church. He may also be given some land owned by the church to cultivate for himself. In addition, he receives gifts in kind from his confessants periodically, is entitled to take part in the various feasts to which priests are regularly invited, and is likely to receive some bequest from time to time.*

The insignia of the priest are modest, but they suffice to inform the stranger that here is a man to be shown special respect: a white turban wrapped around the head and a cross carried in the hand, to be kissed by all comers. Older priests often carry a fly-whisk made of horsehair, and a wicker sun umbrella.

Though there are devout and kindly men among them, the Ethiopian priests have never been particularly noted for their moral qualities. Often they are ungenerous and scheming, and ready to exploit their position at the expense of the laity. They are poorly educated in their own tradition, stuttering

* A sheep, or at least a sheepskin—insurance that the Memorial Mass will be properly performed on the fortieth day after the donor's death.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

covers the Amhara home.* The latter is related to customs concerning adoption.

The adoption of children among traditional Amhara takes place through a ritual in which the child sucks the honey-dipped thumb of his intended foster parent. The latter thereby becomes the child's *ṭuṭ abbāt*, or breast-father. In some cases the child actually sucks the nipples of the *ṭuṭ abbāt*. Used metaphorically, the image of sucking someone's breast is employed to indicate becoming close to, or ingratiating oneself with, a superior; breast-feeding is so explicitly connected with emotional security that people are inclined to allude to it when finding a new source of security.

The Amhara's attachment to passive, pleasurable activities centering on the oral zone appears in a wide variety of forms. Manipulation of the lips is one of these. Amhara often stand about fingering their lips or rubbing them against some object, much as people in another culture might scratch their heads or stroke their chins. Children may be humored by having their lips played with by a relative. The frequent covering and uncovering of the mouth with a part of the toga, that is so characteristic of the Amhara, may be a sublimated form of this.

The lips are used in Amhara culture for a variety of expressive purposes. The Amhara identify persons and places, not by pointing with the finger or hand, but by distending the lips in a certain direction. Kissing, while seldom used for romantic purposes, serves a number of other expressive functions. Relatives or friends of either sex kiss each other on both cheeks after a long separation, the older or superior in status kissing first. Children and servants greet their superiors by kissing their feet, which they also do to show gratitude for some favor. One kisses one's own hands before extending them to receive a gift. Kissing one's fingers is done to signify an oath or a special appreciation of something, the meaning being "I swear by it."

Religious sentiment is typically expressed through kissing. The devout Amhara kisses his fingers and touches the table to show thanksgiving after a meal. The church is greeted by kissing a part of the building, and going to church is referred to as "kissing the church." Following devotional services the priest's cross is kissed by all present, and often the Holy Book is kissed as well. When the ark is brought outside on holidays, reverence is shown by falling to the ground and kissing the earth.

While, moreover, romantic kissing is an uncommon activity among the Amhara, Amharic literature at times represents this activity with poignant intensity. Thus, in an unwritten Amharic couplet one hears:

---

* The Gurage, by contrast, place a straight stick atop their homes. So do the Amhara of Gojjam Province.

*787 *793 869 judged directly according to their offensiveness to the Church, and indirectly according to the availability of morally more acceptable alternatives. Professionally, the acquisition of abinet is guided by the quality and size of the debtera's capital, and of his ability to utilize abinet which are available to him.

*755 *787 *793 869 The First Abinet. With few exceptions, a student's first abinet acquisitions are herbalist therapies and complementary digams. These early therapies address the most persistent threats of his environment, ikek (scabies), saal (cough), and kurtimat (joint pains). In addition, the student frequently obtains the recipe for a stimulant which ostensibly increases his acuity for learning kiyne.

*787 *793 572 431 869 These first abinet studies are generally gifts, since a student rarely possesses anything beyond deference and abjectness with which he can appeal to a potential donor. He has two sources from which he can obtain this knowledge. The first is a gwadeña or sympathetic balinjera. Among a student's fellows, he has a single special friend, whom he calls gwadeña. The gwadeña is his constant companion, who begs for ego when the latter is too sick to get his own food; he is completely trustworthy, and, with the exception of his money reserves gained from gramta sales and the like, whatever he possesses is at ego's disposal. The relationship is sym-

metrical; it is also characteristically brittle, and rarely lasts beyond attendance at the kiyne school. A student's balinjeras are, literally, his mess-mates. They form an exclusive group of peers, reliable confidants pledged to cooperation. Beyond the circle of balinjeras, all students are implicitly towdaderiys (rivals). Between both gwadeña and balinjeras favors are expected to be freely given and no formal accounting kept, although the latter are less committed to sharing than are the former. Because the new boy's gwadeña and balinjera are, like himself, in the first two years of the kiyne curriculum, the abinet repertoire of either consists of few studies, and these with little or no magical content. Ego's second source of abinet is an older, more knowledgeable student, who has been made aware of the novice's difficulties, and is willing to help. The relationship between the donor and recipient here is perceived as an exchange between radat (benefactor) and taraj (beneficiary). The new boy is abject, he is without power, and faces immediate dangers and difficulties. By his gift, the donor dramatizes a status difference between himself and novices in general, differences based on the culturally significant contrast between power and dependency. The recipient, by his deferential behavior, validates the donor's self-image.